

# **Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper**

## **2008 Management Measures**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***March 2008***



#### **Why is NOAA Fisheries Service implementing new measures in the Gulf of Mexico red snapper and shrimp fisheries?**

- The most recent red snapper stock assessment indicates continued overfishing is compromising the objectives of the current Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Gulf Council) red snapper rebuilding plan.
- The interim measures NOAA Fisheries Service implemented in 2007 are temporary in nature and are not sufficient to end overfishing and rebuild the red snapper stock on schedule.

#### **What are the long-term measures to end red snapper overfishing and allow stock recovery?**

- In summary, the measures in the final rule will:
  - Reduce the total allowable catch (TAC) of the commercial and recreational fisheries to 5.0 million pounds (mp) (commercial quota of 2.55 mp; recreational quota of 2.45 mp).
  - Reduce the recreational red snapper bag limit and fishing season.
  - Reduce the commercial size limit.
  - Require the use of venting tools, dehooking devices, and the use of non-stainless steel circle hooks when using natural baits to reduce red snapper bycatch and discard mortality.
  - Establish an adjustable target red snapper bycatch reduction goal for the shrimp trawl fishery, which is managed with seasonal-area closures.

### How do the management measures in the final rule differ from past measures?

- The table below summarizes 2006 management measures, interim measures for the 2007 fishing year, measures implemented by Amendment 27/14, and a 2008 temporary rule.

MANAGEMENT ACTION	2006 Management Measures	2007 Interim Management Measures	2008 Management Measures
Reduce red snapper total allowable catch	9.12 mp (4.65 mp commercial; 4.47 mp recreational)	6.5 mp (3.315 mp commercial/ 3.185 mp recreational)	5.0 mp (2.55 mp commercial/ 2.45 mp recreational)
Reduce commercial red snapper minimum size limit	15" total length	13" total length	13" total length
Reduce recreational red snapper bag limit	4 fish/person/day (also applies to captain & crew of for-hire vessels)	2 fish/person/day (0 fish/person/day for captain & crew of for-hire vessels)	2 fish/person/day (0 fish/person/day for captain & crew of for-hire vessels)
Recreational minimum size limit	16" total length	16" total length	16" total length
Recreational fishing season	April 21-October 31	April 21-October 31	June 1-August 5*
Reduce bycatch in the directed commercial and recreational reef fish fisheries			Require the use of venting tools, dehooking devices, and non-stainless steel circle hooks (when using live bait)
Establish red snapper bycatch mortality reduction goal for shrimp fishery		50% of the bycatch mortality that occurred during 2001-2003	74% of the bycatch mortality that occurred during 2001-2003; relax the target, as allowed, over time to a target reduction goal of 60%
Establish, as necessary, a seasonal closure for the shrimp fishery			Closure beginning on the same start date as the Texas closure in 10 to 30-fathom zone of selected areas in Gulf statistical zones 10-21

Establish a framework procedure to adjust shrimp fishery area and season closures			After an annual assessment, determine the area and duration of closure if needed. Regional Administrator to implement closure
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**\*Note:** Because of less restrictive bag limits and longer seasons in state waters off Florida and Texas, NOAA Fisheries Service has determined the recreational fishery in federal waters must close August 5 to ensure the quota is not exceeded before the end of the fishing year (December 31, 2008).

### **How was the length of the recreational season determined?**

- The Gulf Council proposed a 154-day season in Amendment 27/14 based on its preferred bag limit alternatives and an assumption that recreational fishing effort and landings will be 10 percent below average for an indefinite time period.
- NOAA Fisheries Service determined the assumption of a 10 percent reduction was not based on the best available scientific information.
- Consequently, NOAA Fisheries Service implemented a 122-day recreational fishing season in the final rule based on the Gulf Council's preferred bag limit and minimum size.
- NOAA Fisheries Service's analyses indicate the longer fishing seasons and less restrictive bag limits in state waters will result in a recreational quota overage for the 2008 fishing year of 13.5 percent. Therefore, NOAA Fisheries Service published a temporary rule to close the recreational fishery in federal waters on August 5, 2008, before the end of the established recreational season.

### **When will the measures become effective?**

- All actions except the requirement to use non-stainless steel circle hooks, venting tools, and dehooking devices will become effective on February 28, 2008.
- The requirement to use non-stainless steel circle hooks, venting tools, and dehooking devices will be effective June 1, 2008, to give tackle manufacturers time to provide their products to retail outlets.

### **Links to additional information on red snapper management and rulemaking**

- Red snapper assessment process and reports ([http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/Sedar\\_Workshops.jsp?WorkshopNum=07](http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/Sedar_Workshops.jsp?WorkshopNum=07))
- Interim measures for the red snapper and shrimp fisheries (<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapper/GOMRedSnapperInformation.htm>)
- Commercial red snapper IFQ program (<https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqrs/index.cfm>)
- Red snapper recreational quota closure (<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapperClosure.htm>)